

VR as a catalyst to Ugandan development

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Lawrence Ssenkubuge

Acting Deputy Head-teacher / Information technology Enthusiast
St. Henry's College Kitovu, P.O.Box 64, Masaka, Uganda
Tel. +256 77 401 275

Among the Government of Uganda's current priority areas is the modernization of agriculture and eradication of poverty. These priority areas also include eradication of diseases, especially malaria and HIV Aids. The government has also moved universal primary education into high gear and is doing everything possible to ensure that a Ugandan child of primary school going age gets access to primary school education.

The plan for modernization of agriculture (PMA) and the poverty eradication program (PEAP) have led to a variety of drives that have led to the transformation and empowerment of local people and especially local women. One example is the raising of improved breeds of local chicken through development of locally sustainable methods like breeding chickens with locally developed incubation methods. The program has led to women innovatively and cheaply raising chicken using local technology where the chicken houses are constructed on a concrete slab and the wall made from wooded planks. Locals have developed methods of incubating eggs instead of the expensive electrical incubators.

Similarly, piggery farming has been developed by building small but sustainable piggery units, through use of local materials, piggeries made on platforms and walls made from wooden planks and are widely practiced. The manure that is generated is also used as bio-fertilizer. Biogas can also be made from the waste.

These innovations and success stories need to be transferred to other areas. Often, advocates for the new methods have used visits or videos to enable other potential beneficiaries who have not started to learn the does and don'ts of the new process.

Another example is in the growing of upland rice which is an innovation that has been spearheaded by the Vice President, where people have been able to improve their household incomes by growing rice. In order to share the skills and knowledge, field trips are organized, but so much more could be done.

Introduction of solar panels in rural areas where the national grid is out of reach (and especially now, where severe power shortages are common) involves exposing people to the technologies in order to encourage wider usage.

The control of malaria is another challenge, as well as the spread of information about the Aids pandemic.

Use of resources like the Malaria interactive CD that can be localized and the facts shared with the local community can significantly make an impact in assisting health-workers to fight malaria. Developing VR models (Interactive3d Learning Objects) that can help farmers visualize improved chicken rearing by developing virtual reality models that can be distributed through the community telecentres could go a long way in catalyzing the drive of eradicating poverty.

Models that describe the way rice can be grown, processed and stored can be fundamental in transferring knowledge between practicing communities and communities that can adopt the best farming practices.

The fact that we are building local capacity to translate models means that if there are existing models (such as the bee keeping VR model), these can be translated and circulated to the local communities for adoption.



Students pay a physical visit to a sculptor: not so necessary when i3dlo's can also capture knowledge